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Historical Commission Minutes 11-08-2000

Meeting of Wednesday, 8 November 2000

Whittemore Robbins House, 7:30 PM

1. Call to Order: Robert Botterio, presiding; commissioners Jane Becker, Patrick Guthrie, Pamela Meister, Michael Ruderman, and JoAnn Robinson attending and voting throughout; also associate Eric Stange and secretary Lyz Carey.
2. Review of minutes of 3 October 2000: accepted, with the one change, in section 5i, of Ms. Meister's being unable to attend only the one meeting of the Zoning By-Law Review Committee in question.
3. Communications relayed by Mr. Botterio:
 First were several items from the Massachusetts Historical Commission, beginning with a request for updated commissioner contact information. There was also the official notification that Arlington had been unsuccessful in its latest application for grant funding (Round VII of the Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program) to restore the Winfield Robbins Memorial Gardens. Ms. Robinson felt that this decision was no reflection on the project or on the town's application (written by Alan McClennen and Claire Dempsey of the town's Planning Department), but the MHC's desire to favor new applicants and new projects in this round. Evidence of Arlington's renown in landscape preservation is the cover photograph of the program's 1997-2000 Annual (*sic*) Report: the Menotomy Hunter and its reflecting pool. Ms. Robinson is hopeful for the success of a coming application to the Smithsonian Institution for public sculpture preservation assistance. Finally the MHC circulated a list of the amounts of state funds going to town historical commissions throughout Massachusetts.

Maryellen Remmert-Loud, director of the town's public library, reports that a commercial system of pigeon barriers and deterrents has been installed on the cornice ledges of the main building.

Mr. Brad Shatola, the architect working on a renovation plan for the Regent Theater (8-13 Medford Street, an inventoried structure), called for information, and was invited to discuss his preliminary designs with the commission at a later date.

Owners of the properties at 28 Fessenden Road (skylights) and 5-7 Park Street (vinyl insulated windows for wood) were informed that their projects fell below the 25% threshold of the affected facade.

Neighbors of the inventoried structure at 4 Mystic Bank have asked if the remodeling of this structure does not exceed that same 25% threshold which would require a formal hearing to approve. Mr. Ruderman will examine the project and report back to Mr. Botterio.

The board which oversees the town's Preservation Fund has a vacancy for someone with interest and experience in local history. Mr. Guthrie volunteers; his report will appear on the agenda of future meetings of the commission.

4. Review of Projects

- a) 5-11 Water Street (Rowe) 8/97: Botterio-tenants are moving in, and the owner is addressing neighbors' concerns over the volume of the ventilation equipment and the hours of the stairwells' illumination, visible to the outside.
- b) 45 Fairview Avenue (Trvalik): Ms. Trvalik, visiting this meeting, wishes to present new plans for the proposed (and as yet unbuilt) addition at a formal hearing next month.
- c) 362 Mystic Street (Davidson) 4/99: Guthrie-*still* needs paint.
- d) 95-97 Mystic Street (Nyberg): Guthrie-discussions of relocating an inventoried, but unwanted, carriage house onto this lot have been abrogated by the construction of a new garage. Mr. Guthrie will look into whether there was a mechanism here for influencing the owners' choice, and report back.
- e) 125 Brattle Lane/Farmer's Lane (Colonial Ridge LLC) 11/99: Robinson-farmhouse has been gutted and stripped, awaiting relocation on the leveled site.
- f) 143 Woodside (Bouvier) 7/00: Guthrie-work continues according to plan.

- g) 23 Academy Street (Chiccarelli) 7/00: Becker, for Cohen-nearly done, and to great effect.
- h) 1167 Mass. Ave. (Mirak) 9/00: Guthrie-three lower-story windows have been reconditioned.

5. Reports

- a) Whittemore Robbins House: Carey-update coming regarding repairs to the front porch and the carriage house.
- b) Arlington Civic Block Garden: Robinson-see the first paragraph of Communications (above).
- c) Updates and Expansion to Inventory: Cohen, Meister, Guthrie, Becker-no activity.
- d) Inventory of public buildings: Stange and Robinson-no activity.
- e) Inventory of significant lots: Botterio-no activity.
- f) Education/Outreach: Stange, Botterio-no activity, beyond interviews for video project.
- g) 743 Massachusetts Avenue (Osco): Robinson-Land Court in Boston heard, on October 16 and 17, the petitioners' appeal of the Redevelopment Board's decision.
- h) Affordable Housing Task Force: Stange-the non-profit Housing Corporation of Arlington has been reconstituted, with a new board, and will begin its new existence by managing the town-owned house at Reed's Brook. The task force will present to the next Town Meeting a proposal for an inclusionary zoning law, mandating affordable housing.
- i) Zoning By-Law Review Committee: Meister-the committee has met with the Redevelopment Board to discuss the idea of protecting properties in the penumbra of historic districts, as well as proposing the Civic Block as the town's eighth historic district.
- j) Historic Districts Commission: Cohen-absent.
- k) Old Burying Ground survey and assessment-Robinson-no activity.

6. New Business

Formal Hearing: 962 Massachusetts Avenue (Rita Yegian, owner)

Ms. Yegian, although not present at the hearing, had conveyed her intention to Mr. Botterio by telephone to request permission to demolish the house on this lot. The subject property is a two family, Greek-revival style structure, with a later added porch, dating from the third quarter of the nineteenth century. It is one of the few remaining representatives of the once predominant architectural style along Massachusetts Avenue, particularly before the demolition of most residences thereupon to make way for commercial uses.

Mr. Charles Poulos, owner of neighboring property, appeared to voice his opinion that he found nothing objectionable in the request for demolition.

The Commission felt that the age and rarity of this type of structure, particularly in this location, made a compelling argument to delay demolition under Title VI, Article 4 of the Bylaws of the Town of Arlington.

On behalf of the absent owner, Mr. Botterio made the following motion, which was seconded by Mr. Guthrie: to deny the demolition of the inventoried structure at 962 Massachusetts Avenue. The Commission voted unanimously (6-0) for the motion.

Formal Hearing: 5 Brattle Court (Mike Daniel, owner)

Mr. Daniel was represented at this hearing by Mr. David Veo of Freedom Development Corporation, and by Mr. Stephen McKenna of Bowes Real Estate. The subject property is a single family worker's cottage dating from approximately the 1850s. While its exterior has changed significantly over the years, its footprint is substantially unchanged from the original construction. Its architectural style, mass and location make it one of a piece with the neighboring house at 7 Brattle Court, the demolition of which these same two representatives appeared before this commission two months ago to request.

As was the case then, the commission sees 5 Brattle Court as one of a dwindling number of antebellum houses in Arlington, all the more rare and imperiled by demolition by its being a humble worker's cottage, and not a large and fashionable home. The petitioners, then as now, offered no alternative plans for incorporating the house into their foreseen development (although we note, with sincere approbation, Mr. McKenna's efforts to market the house at 7 Brattle Court separately from its houselot.) Indeed, Mr. Daniel's application to the Building Department stated his intention "to proceed to meet with the Historical Commission so that they can deny me their permission to demolish house."

Ms. Robinson made the motion, seconded by Ms. Meister, to deny the request for demolition under Title VI, Article 4 of the Bylaws of the Town of Arlington, and the Commission voted unanimously (6-0) in favor of the denial.

In other new business, Mr. Botterio reported on the town-owned house at 23 Maple Street: requests for (renovation) proposals have been issued, and applicant interviews begin November 28. Ms. Robinson and Mr. Guthrie will monitor this project and report to the commission.

Next meeting: confirmed for Tuesday, December 5, here, at 7:30 pm, and this meeting adjourned at 9:45 pm.

For the Arlington Historical Commission,

A. Michael Ruderman, Commissioner